

Dear Sir,

I refer to a review of my book, *Smuggled — The Underground Trade in Australia's Wildlife*, published in *Herpetology in Australia* in December 1993. The Editor, Dan Lunney, has allowed me to publish corrections on the strict basis that I do not exceed 200 words. On those terms I cannot correct all mistakes and defamatory comments made by the reviewer, Ms Shelley Burgin.

Burgin demonstrated clear bias against the book by constantly using emotive terms such as "largely unsubstantiated", "virtually all unsubstantiated" and "ridiculous beyond belief" to describe the book. Yet she was unable to factually contradict a single point in *Smuggled*. The reason was that *Smuggled* had been checked as correct by three lawyers. Burgin's review was factually in error and dishonest.

For example she stated "After printing so many allegations against people capable of such crimes (NPWS/NSW), how is it that he is still walking the streets of Sydney in good health?" For the record I have lived in Melbourne for the last nine years!

That such emotive tripe could be printed in your publication demonstrates lack of editorial discipline — particularly alarming when all material is supposedly reviewed at least twice prior to printing.

Raymond Hoser

Dear Sir,

The back cover of the *Australian Zoologist* for August 1993 (Volume 29, No. 1–2) is a painting by John Lewin of the Cox's River, 1815. The caption for the painting refers to "... the marked changes that had already occurred to both the aquatic and terrestrial habitats from cattle grazing ..." early in the settlement of the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment. Historical paintings, such as Lewin's, and photographs are often the only clues available to ecologists attempting to recreate past environments and thereby document the changes induced by European settlement. We used both in our interpretation of the changes to the biota of the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment. Neither are without their biases and errors.

The photographs available to us were taken as early as the 1880s, but for the earlier "pictures" we had to rely on paintings. The photographs were disappointing and provided remarkably little information because almost all concentrated on human structures such as bridges, weirs and boats. None were pictures

of habitats, such as an ecologist might take, and there were few pictures of "scenery" that might have been interpreted for their biological or ecological information. In contrast, many of the paintings were of landscapes and seemingly could, therefore, be used to interpret habitats and changes to habitats. As the historian (SR) among us has pointed out, the caption for Lewin's painting (written by HFR) illustrates that more care must be exercised by biologists when using paintings as a source of ecological information.

Lewin's painting in 1815 was done when Lewin accompanied Macquarie on the first official trip across the mountains on Cox's newly constructed road. Aside from the oxen associated with the construction works there had been no cattle there and there were none at that time. With the exception of the road, what Lewin painted is an Aboriginal-maintained landscape. Lewin probably put in the cow (and a soldier in a uniform not worn in New South Wales) because he thought it looked good artistically. It was also the kind of open woodland that Europeans viewed as ideal grazing country and so he "stocked it", perhaps suggesting its potential use.

In a way, this ecologist was right — it was an anthropogenic landscape. He just had the grazing herbivores and land managers wrong. Instead of cattle and Europeans, it was kangaroos and Aboriginal people. No doubt the latter made good use of fire to create and maintain the open landscape. The confusion would have been avoided by closer consultation with the historian.

Yours sincerely,

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(Editor's Note: Neither the editor nor the referees picked the problem because they are ecologists who had overlooked the now obvious point that the illustrators of the day were not looking at the landscape with an ecological eye. It is hard enough for contemporary Australians to recognize an original landscape from one that is degraded. Harry, if you took up painting, what would be in your landscapes of the Hawkesbury? I have a back cover spot in reserve — Dan.)